Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): An isolated nucleic acid encoding an Sitosterolemia Susceptibility Gene (SSG) polypeptide, said polypeptide comprising an amino acid sequence that is at least about 70% identical to an amino acid sequence as set forth in SEQ ID NO:~~1 or~~ 3, wherein said amino acid sequence comprises a sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO:5 and SEQ ID NO:6.

Claim 2 (currently amended): The nucleic acid of claim 1, wherein said polypeptide specifically binds to polyclonal antibodies generated against a polypeptide that comprises an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of ~~SEQ ID NO:1,~~ SEQ ID NO:3, SEQ ID NO:5 and SEQ ID NO:6.

Claim 3 (currently amended): The nucleic acid of claim 1, wherein said polypeptide comprises an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of ~~SEQ ID NO:1~~, SEQ ID NO:3, SEQ ID NO:5 and SEQ ID NO:6.

Claim 4 (original): The nucleic acid of claim 1, wherein said polypeptide forms a dimer with a second ABC polypeptide, and wherein said dimer exhibits sterol transport activity.

Claim 5 (original): The nucleic acid of claim 4, wherein said dimer is a heterodimer.

Claim 6 (original): The nucleic acid of claim 4, wherein said sterol is cholesterol.

Claim 7 (currently amended): The nucleic acid of claim 5, wherein said second ABC polypeptide is ATP-Binding Cassette 8 (ABC8).

Claim 8 (currently amended): The nucleic acid of claim 1, wherein said nucleic acid hybridizes under moderately stringent hybridization conditions comprising 40% formamide, 1M NaCl, 1% SDS at 37°C and wash conditions of 1x SSC at 45°C to a nucleic acid comprising a nucleotide sequence as set forth in SEQ ID NO:~~2 or~~ 4.

Claim 9 (currently amended): The nucleic acid of claim 8, wherein said nucleic acid hybridizes under stringent hybridization conditions comprising 50% formamide, 5x SSC, 1% SDS at 65°C and wash conditions of 0.2x SSC, 0.1% SDS at 65°C to a nucleic acid comprising a nucleotide sequence as set forth in SEQ ID NO:~~2 or~~ 4.

Claim 10 (currently amended): The nucleic acid of claim 1, wherein said nucleic acid comprises a nucleotide sequence at least about 70% identical to a sequence as set forth in SEQ ID NO:~~2 or~~ 4.

Claim 11 (currently amended): The nucleic acid of claim 1, wherein said nucleic acid comprises a nucleotide sequence as set forth in SEQ ID NO:~~2 or~~ 4.

Claim 12 (original): The nucleic acid of claim 1, wherein said nucleic acid is greater than 502 nucleotides in length.

Claim 13 (original): The nucleic acid of claim 1, wherein said nucleic acid is from a mouse or a human.

Claim 14 (original): The nucleic acid of claim 1, wherein said nucleic acid is expressed in the intestine or in the liver in the presence of an LXR agonist.

Claim 15 (original): The nucleic acid of claim 1, wherein said nucleic acid is expressed in a tissue selected from the group consisting of liver, jejunum, ileum, and duodenum.

Claim 16 (original): An isolated nucleic acid encoding an SSG polypeptide, said polypeptide comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO:5 and SEQ ID NO:6.

Claim 17 (original): An expression cassette comprising the nucleic acid of claim 1 operably linked to a promoter.

Claim 18 (original): An isolated cell comprising the expression cassette of claim 17.

Claim 19 (withdrawn): An isolated SSG polypeptide, said polypeptide comprising an amino acid sequence that is at least about 70% identical to an amino acid sequence as set forth in SEQ ID NO:1 or 3.

Claim 20 (withdrawn): The isolated polypeptide of claim 19, wherein said polypeptide selectively binds to polyclonal antibodies generated against a polypeptide comprising an amino acid sequence as set forth in SEQ ID NO:1 or 3.

Claim 21 (withdrawn): The isolated polypeptide of claim 19, wherein said polypeptide comprises an amino acid sequence as set forth in SEQ ID NO:1 or 3.

Claim 22 (withdrawn): The isolated polypeptide of claim 19, wherein said polypeptide forms a dimer with a second ABC polypeptide, and wherein said dimer exhibits sterol transport activity.

Claim 23 (withdrawn): The isolated polypeptide of claim 22, wherein said dimer is a heterodimer.

Claim 24 (withdrawn): The isolated polypeptide of claim 23, wherein said second ABC polypeptide is ABC8.

Claim 25 (withdrawn): The isolated polypeptide of claim 22, wherein said sterol is cholesterol.

Claim 26 (withdrawn): The isolated polypeptide of claim 19, wherein said polypeptide is expressed in the intestine or in the liver in the presence of an LXR agonist.

Claim 27 (withdrawn): The isolated polypeptide of claim 19, wherein said polypeptide is expressed in a tissue selected from the group consisting of the liver, jejunum, ileum, and duodenum.

Claim 28 (withdrawn): The isolated polypeptide of claim 29, wherein said polypeptide is from a mouse or a human.

Claim 29 (withdrawn): An antibody generated against the isolated polypeptide of claim 19.

Claim 30 (withdrawn): An isolated SSG polypeptide, said polypeptide comprising an amino acid sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO:5 and SEQ ID NO:6.

Claim 31. (original) A method of making an SSG polypeptide, the method comprising:

(i) introducing a nucleic acid of claim 1 into a host cell or cellular extract; and

(ii) incubating said host cell or cellular extract under conditions such that said SSG polypeptide is expressed in the host cell or cellular extract.

Claim 32. (original) The method of claim 31, further comprising recovering the SSG polypeptide from the host cell or cellular extract.

Claim 33 (withdrawn): A method of identifying a compound useful in the treatment or prevention of a sterol-related disorder, said method comprising contacting an SSG

polypeptide with a test agent, and determining the functional effect of said test agent upon said polypeptide, wherein a functional effect exerted on said polypeptide by said test agent indicates that said test agent is a compound useful in the treatment or prevention of said sterol-related disorder.

Claim 34 (withdrawn): The method of claim 33, wherein said sterol is cholesterol.

Claim 35 (withdrawn): The method of claim 33, wherein said polypeptide comprises an amino acid sequence that is at least about 70% identical to an amino acid sequence as set forth in SEQ ID NO:1 or 3.

Claim 36 (withdrawn): The method of claim 33, wherein said polypeptide is present in a cell or cell membrane.

Claim 37 (withdrawn): The method of claim 33, wherein said polypeptide is bound to a heterologous ABC polypeptide, forming a heterodimer.

Claim 38 (withdrawn): The method of claim 33, wherein said functional effect comprises an increase in the sterol transport activity of said polypeptide.

Claim 39 (withdrawn): The method of claim 33, wherein said functional effect comprises a physical interaction between said test agent and said polypeptide.

Claim 40 (withdrawn): The method of claim 39, wherein said physical interaction is detected using a direct binding assay.

Claim 41 (withdrawn): The method of claim 33, wherein said sterol-related disorder is sitosterolemia.

Claim 42 (withdrawn): The method of claim 33, wherein said sterol-related disorder is selected from the group consisting of hypercholesterolemia, hyperlipidemia, gall stones, HDL deficiency, atherosclerosis, and nutritional deficiencies.

Claim 43 (withdrawn): A method of identifying a compound useful in the treatment or prevention of a sterol-related disorder, said method comprising contacting with a test agent a cell that expresses or is capable of expressing an SSG polypeptide, and determining the functional effect of said test agent upon said cell;

wherein a functional effect exerted on said cell by said test agent indicates that said test agent is a compound useful in the treatment or prevention of said sterol-related disorder.

Claim 44 (withdrawn): The method of claim 43, wherein said sterol is cholesterol.

Claim 45 (withdrawn): The method of claim 43, wherein said SSG polypeptide comprises an amino acid sequence that is at least about 70% identical to an amino acid sequence as set forth in SEQ ID NO:1 or 3.

Claim 46 (withdrawn): The method of claim 43, wherein said compound produces an increase in the expression of an SSG gene that encodes said SSG polypeptide.

Claim 47 (withdrawn): The method of claim 46, wherein said increase in the expression of said SSG gene is detected by detecting the level of SSG mRNA in said cell.

Claim 48 (withdrawn): The method of claim 46, wherein said increase in the expression of said SSG gene is detected by detecting the level of SSG polypeptide in said cell.

Claim 49. (withdrawn): The method of claim 46, wherein said increase in the expression of said SSG gene is detected by detecting the level of SSG protein activity in said cell.

Claim 50 (withdrawn): The method of claim 43, wherein said compound modulates the level of sterol transport activity in said cell.

Claim 51 (withdrawn): The method of claim 50, wherein said sterol transport activity in said cell is detected by detecting the rate of sterol efflux in said cell.

Claim 52 (withdrawn): The method of claim 51, wherein said sterol is cholesterol.

Claim 53 (withdrawn): The method of claim 46, wherein said increase in the expression of said SSG gene is mediated by LXR or RXR.

Claim 54 (withdrawn): The method of claim 43, wherein said sterol-related disorder is sitosterolemia.

Claim 55 (withdrawn): The method of claim 43, wherein said sterol-related disorder is selected from the group consisting of hypercholesterolemia, hyperlipidemia, gall stones, HDL deficiency, atherosclerosis, and nutritional deficiencies.

Claim 56 (withdrawn): A method of treating or preventing a sterol-related disorder in a mammal, said method comprising administering to said mammal a compound that increases the level of expression or activity of an SSG polypeptide in a plurality of cells of said mammal.

Claim 57 (withdrawn): The method of claim 56, wherein said sterol is cholesterol.

Claim 58 (withdrawn): The method of claim 56, wherein said sterol-related disorder is sitosterolemia.

Claim 59 (withdrawn): The method of claim 56, wherein said sterol-related disorder is selected from the group consisting of hypercholesterolemia, hyperlipidemia, gall stones, HDL deficiency, atherosclerosis, and nutritional deficiencies.

Claim 60 (withdrawn): The method of claim 56, wherein said compound produces a decrease in the amount of dietary sterol that is absorbed in said mammal.

Claim 61 (withdrawn): The method of claim 56, wherein said compound produces a decrease in the amount of sterol that is retained in the liver of said mammal.

Claim 62 (withdrawn): The method of claim 56, wherein said compound is identified using the method of claim 33 or 43.

Claim 63 (withdrawn): The method of claim 56, wherein said compound causes an increase in LXR or RXR activity within cells of said mammal.

Claim 64 (withdrawn): A method of prescreening to identify a candidate therapeutic agent that modulates SSG activity in a mammal, the method comprising:

providing a cell which comprises an SSG polypeptide; and

a test compound; and

determining whether the amount of sterol transport activity in said cell is increased or decreased in the presence of the test compound relative to the activity in the absence of the test compound;

wherein a test compound that causes an increase or decrease in the amount of sterol transport activity is a candidate therapeutic agent for modulation of SSG activity in a mammal.

Claim 65 (withdrawn): The method of claim 64, further comprising a secondary step, wherein said test compound is administered to a mammal, and the absorption of dietary sterol in said mammal is detected.

Claim 66 (withdrawn): A method of inducing the expression of an ABC gene in a mammalian cell, said method comprising increasing the level of LXR or RXR activity in said cell.

Claim 67 (withdrawn): The method of claim 66, wherein said ABC gene encodes a protein that is involved in the transport of a sterol.

Claim 68 (withdrawn): The method of claim 67, wherein said ABC gene is selected from the group consisting of SSG, ABC1 and ABC8.

Claim 69 (withdrawn): The method of claim 67, wherein said sterol is cholesterol.

Claim 70 (withdrawn): The method of claim 66, wherein said LXR or RXR activity is increased by administering an LXR or RXR agonist to said cell.

Claim 71 (withdrawn): The method of claim 66, wherein said cell is present in a mammal.

Claim 72 (withdrawn): The method of claim 66, wherein said cell is a liver, intestinal, or kidney cell.

Claim 73 (withdrawn): An isolated nucleic acid comprising at least one nucleotide sequence selected from the group consisting of exon 1 (SEQ ID NO:7), exon 2 (SEQ ID NO:8), exon 3 (SEQ ID NO:9), exon 4 (SEQ ID NO:10), exon 5 (SEQ ID NO:11), exon 6 (SEQ ID NO:12), exon 7 (SEQ ID NO:13), exon 8 (SEQ ID NO:14), exon 9 (SEQ ID NO:15), exon 10 (SEQ ID NO:16), exon 11 (SEQ ID NO:17), exon 12 (SEQ ID NO:18) and exon 13 (SEQ ID NO:19).

Claim 74 (withdrawn): The isolated nucleic acid sequence of claim 73, further comprising at least one intron.

Claim 75 (new): The nucleic acid of claim 1, wherein said amino acid sequence is at least about 80% identical to said amino acid sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:3.

Claim 76 (new): The nucleic acid of claim 1, wherein said amino acid sequence is at least about 90% identical to said amino acid sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:3.

Claim 77 (new): The nucleic acid of claim 1, wherein said amino acid sequence is at least about 95% identical to said amino acid sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:3.